

Minutes of Special Meeting of January 24, 2009 (Council Workshop)
Twin Pines Park Lodge, 40 Twin Pines Lane, Belmont, CA

CALL TO ORDER 9:05 A.M.

ROLL CALL

COUNCILMEMBERS PRESENT: Feierbach, Dickenson, Lieberman, Wozniak, Braunstein

STAFF PRESENT: City Manager Crist, City Treasurer Violet, Parks and Recreation Director Gervais, City Clerk Cook

ADDITIONAL BUSINESS

Dashboard Indicators

Mayor Braunstein stated that this is a living document that can provide a snapshot of topics within various departments. He provided examples from other organizations, and described some sample data for Belmont. He noted that the new City software has the capability to integrate indicators.

Councilmember Lieberman noted that a version of this type of document was used at one time by the Finance Commission. He supports integrating its use.

Councilmember Wozniak expressed support as well. She noted there is a need to determine what you are measuring and who your audience is. She recommended keeping the list short and simple.

City Manager Crist stated that there is a need to provide a standard on where to draw the line for each of the red, yellow and green lights. The indicators will be a helpful research tool.

City Attorney Zafferano stated it can be used to help shift priorities as necessary. Implementation may be a challenge.

Parks and Recreation Director Gervais stated that the indicators are not just numbers or budget-based.

Mayor Braunstein suggested using customer service as an indicator.

Discussion ensued.

Councilmember Dickenson described the 3-1-1 service used in San Francisco, and suggested that other best practice models may be available. The indicators can be used to help with the budget process.

Councilmember Lieberman stated that this could be done under a subcommittee structure, as it may be difficult to flush out at a city council meeting.

Discussion ensued regarding the subcommittee process.

City Manager Crist stated that internal and external customers can be measured concurrently. He suggested this become a priority calendar item. Council concurred.

Ordinance Update Prioritization

City Attorney Zafferano stated that the proposed open space ordinance and the revision of the existing sign ordinance are major items, and there are many other ordinances on the pending list. Council meeting time is challenged, as there are many other priorities that demand time from the Council. He described the timeline that would be necessary to place the potential open space initiative on the November ballot. He spoke regarding the pending emergency services ordinance and noted there may be a desire to eliminate public locations from the data.

Councilmember Dickenson stated that there had been an issue at the former Ralston Village property in which their staff was utilizing fire services for tasks that should have been performed by their own staff. He noted that Motel 6 often has problems. He supported maintaining the high school data.

Discussion ensued regarding the emergency call data.

City Manager Crist recommended that data be measured by staff rather than through an ordinance.

Councilmember Lieberman expressed support for dropping this issue entirely. He noted that there are other issues that are more in need of Council and staff's time. He would prefer to address problems with individual excessive calls at the staff level. He does not want to discourage the use of 9-1-1, and he noted that the City is not staffing for additional calls. He also noted that Chief Mattei is not in favor of the ordinance. The ordinance may not be the best way to address this issue, and may penalize others and have unintended consequences. He clarified he does not wish to ignore the issue.

City Attorney Zafferano noted that the raising of this issue placed a spotlight on some problem areas.

Councilmember Dickenson stated that he wants to see a percentage of resources that are being spent on individual locations.

Councilmember Wozniak expressed support for continuing to look at this potential ordinance, but this issue could be placed lower, as some progress has been made. She recommended highlighting the highest call volumes.

Councilmember Feierbach stated that Chief Mattei spends too much of his time trying to solve problems. She expressed support for the ordinance.

Councilmember Braunstein stated that he concurs with Councilmember Lieberman. He does not wish to make laws to deal with personnel or personalities.

Councilmember Dickenson noted that the police department is doing a good job but needs resources, and the ordinance is a resource.

Council concurred to bring this issue back at a future meeting for continued discussion.

On the matter of the open space initiative, Councilmember Wozniak stated it is important, and she supports moving forward with this issue.

Councilmember Feierbach concurred. She noted that she takes issue with the Government Code citations provided by the city attorney regarding this issue. She noted that most open space that has been donated to the City is done through density transfer, except Twin Pines Park. She supports changing the zoning of some sites for simplification, and wants to provide flexibility for the use of parcels. She noted that other cities are borrowing from their open space.

Councilmember Lieberman stated he agrees with the intent of the ordinance. There are mechanisms in place to preserve open space. This is not a pressing issue. He expressed concern regarding the amount of time that this issue will require. He noted former Councilmember Warden's comments when this issue came up in 2001, regarding his desire not to tie the hands of future city councils.

Mayor Braunstein expressed concern regarding the amount of time that this matter would require. He wants to focus on economic development. There are other ordinances and issues that need attention.

City Attorney Zafferano noted that some council members may have a conflict of interest on this issue due to proximity to parks or open space sites.

RECESS: 10:30 A.M.
RECONVENE: 10:40 A.M.

Subcommittee Organization Structure

City Manager Crist stated that it is important to find ways to measure success. Quality work requires good communication, and a good subcommittee structure is key. Currently there is not a strong link between staff, city commissions, and the City Council. Some areas such as public safety and labor negotiations are not currently under the auspices of any subcommittee. Infrastructure has been a dominant topic for the City Council. Subcommittees allow issues to be flushed out ahead of time. He provided alternatives to the current subcommittee structure, and noted that progress has been made in economic development and infrastructure. City Council agendas are always full. He noted that attention to just the list of pending ordinances could fill Council agendas.

Mayor Braunstein expressed support for changing the subcommittee structure in order to fill holes. The labor process has been frustrating. He expressed support for Model 2, and noted that green issues needs to be added to the list. The subcommittee structure should be tied to Council's intergovernmental assignments. The budget process is absent from ongoing Council discussions.

Councilmember Wozniak stated that more Council meetings may be necessary, and there needs to be more efficiency. Better communication between subcommittee members and staff is desirable. She expressed support for restructuring of the subcommittees.

Councilmember Feierbach stated that subcommittee meetings should be treated like Council meetings and agendas and minutes should be posted to the web. Other areas are not currently covered under the existing structure, such as open space. There is merit to reorganizing and expanding the current system.

Councilmember Lieberman stated that the Council agenda Item 8 is a communication tool for reporting out subcommittee work. It has helped, but needs improvement. If there is to be a restructuring of the subcommittees, there is a need to provide a reporting mechanism, or possibly have staff prepare a report. The 9-1-1 ordinance discussion is an example of a restructuring need. He stated he feels more comfortable and productive to vet details at the subcommittee level. It is difficult to delve into details at City Council meetings. He expressed support for the proposed Model 2, and noted there could be four or five subcommittees.

Councilmember Dickenson expressed support for the subcommittee process. Minutes need to be produced and circulated so that the City Council can review them ahead of meetings. Public safety should be added to the structure. He noted that economic development affects public safety. He wants to be proactive rather than reactive.

Councilmember Feierbach suggested adding commission members to subcommittees. City Attorney Zafferano noted that only a minority number of each commission could participate.

City Treasurer Violet suggested referring more issues to commissions.

Discussion ensued.

Councilmember Dickenson expressed support for Model 2, and to add a fourth subcommittee.

City Manager Crist noted that code enforcement is missing from the current and proposed structure, and should be added. He commented that this would be a future Council report.

Council Intergovernmental Assignments

City Clerk Cook noted that this item was deferred from the December Council meeting in order to wait for the subcommittee discussion. She noted that any new subcommittee structure could be incorporated later, as appropriate.

Mayor Braunstein noted that Vice-Mayor Wozniak holds a number of external assignments, and it is his desire to help her prepare for being Mayor next year. There is a need to be strategic.

In response to Councilmember Wozniak's inquiry regarding the genesis of having a Council liaison to the Finance Commission, Councilmember Lieberman clarified that many Council members had little finance background. Since the Vice Mayor is often the presumed incoming Mayor, having him or her serve as liaison is helpful.

Councilmember Feierbach noted that if the Finance and Parks and Recreation Commission meetings were televised, it would open up communications.

Councilmember Lieberman expressed concern regarding the effect that televising the meetings would have on the current free-flowing discussions at those commission meetings.

Discussion ensued regarding the individual intergovernmental assignments.

ACTION: On a motion by Councilmember Lieberman, seconded by Councilmember Wozniak, and unanimously approved by a show of hands to eliminate the Harbor Industrial Area (HIA) assignment, and to fold the HIA into the Economic Development subcommittee.

Discussion ensued, and Intergovernmental assignments were changed. Council concurred that the current members of the Audit Committee would attend one additional meeting before the new committee members take over.

Redevelopment Agency Attorney Interview Process

City Manager Crist stated that firms had been interviewed by staff, and Council would be interviewing two firms in order to give direction on a final choice.

City Attorney Zafferano described the vetting process used by staff. He noted that the attorney to be selected should be someone who can work and interface well with staff. Three firms were initially interviewed, and two have been recommended. The issue is which firm is the best fit. Either is good.

Councilmember Lieberman questioned whether the Council had the expertise to be able to judge.

Councilmember Dickenson stated that it is important for the Council to be involved in the process. Councilmember Feierbach concurred.

City Attorney Zafferano noted that the attorney needs to interface well under adversity. He described details of the interview process used by staff.

Council Comments

Mayor Braunstein thanked everyone for attending a productive session.

City Treasurer Violet provided copies of a booklet produced by the California Municipal Treasurers Association which he thought the City Council would find helpful.

Councilmember Dickenson shared information discussed at a recent Office of Emergency Services Meeting regarding County-wide CERT (Citizen Emergency Response Team). He also commented regarding Silicon Valley Joint Venture's proposed new Emergency Services Training Center at Moffett Field.

ADJOURNMENT at this time, being 12:38 P.M.

Terri Cook
Belmont City Clerk

Meeting Tape Recorded (but not videotaped)
Audio Recording 716